

**Introducing CM/ECF  
U.S. Bankruptcy Court  
District of North Dakota  
March 2003**



Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) is a convenient new automated case management and docketing system provided by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) specifically for the federal courts. The case management and docketing (CM) portion replaces the aging software currently used by many courts with a nationally-supported but flexible system that provides customizable docketing and reporting capability. The electronic case files (ECF) portion allows courts to manage documents electronically; to provide 24-hour desktop access to court files by judges, court staff, and the public; and to accept filings over the Internet.

**Why Develop a New Case Management (CM) System?**

The new system was developed:

- Because existing case management systems are aging and will soon exceed their projected life-spans
- Because the database program underlying existing system is no longer supported by the manufacturer and is increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain
- To offer courts and the public enhanced capabilities using updated technology

**What Does CM Offer?**

CM will not only offer the capabilities of previous AO developed case management systems, but expands on them by providing:

- User-friendly screens and pull down options for data entry
- Easier case information retrieval and reporting
- Generation of reports from a single integrated system

**What are Electronic Case Files (ECF)?**

Electronic case files are collections of documents stored in electronic format instead of on paper. Documents can be created electronically by parties and court staff or paper copies can be scanned. All documents are stored in Portable Document Format (PDF).

**What Does the ECF Portion of CM/ECF Offer?**

The ECF portion of the system is easy to use and allows a court to store, retrieve, review and send case documents in a reliable and secure electronic format. ECF can also offer the following benefits:

- Twenty-four hour access to case files

from any location (bench, chambers, home, divisional offices, etc.) over the DCN or Internet

- Remote document filing
- Docketing as a by-product of electronic filing
- Concurrent access to files
- Immediate e-mail notification of case activity to parties and court staff
- Reduced need for physical file space
- Easy public access
- Secure storage of documents (so files are not misplaced)
- Court flexibility to choose when and how to use the ECF capabilities
- Continued use of paper if desired

### **Will CM/ECF Become Mandatory for our Customers?**

We will be required to utilize the case management component of the CM/ECF system because the prior BANCAP docketing system will be discontinued upon going “live.” At this time there are no plans to require all parties to file pleadings or other papers electronically, using ECF.

### **How Electronic Filing Works**

To file electronically, attorneys create documents on their computers just as they do now. Instead of printing the document on paper, however, attorneys save it in a portable document format that can be read by others with all formatting intact regardless of the type of computer or word processor they use. Attorneys then access the electronic filing system through an Internet provider. Attorneys will receive a court assigned user identification name and password that will serve as a verified signature for electronically filed documents. The attorney indicates the case number the document applies

to, the party the document is being filed on behalf of, and the type of document (answer, motion, etc.) being filed. The document is then sent over the Internet to the court's computer which immediately sends a receipt back to the attorney's screen verifying that the document has been received. The receipt can be printed or saved for future reference. Additionally, the system automatically creates a docket entry and makes both the updated docket sheet as well as the document itself instantly available to anyone with access to the Internet and a PACER account. The system also sends e-mail notification of the filing to case participants who are registered to use the CM/ECF system.

Although a case manager may not do the docketing, there will be the continued responsibility over the quality, workmanship and final product of not just the docket entries, but also the life of the case. Tools and procedures will be in place to ensure this takes place.

### **When will CM/ECF be Available?**

Implementation of CM/ECF will begin in September 2003. This process usually takes 10-12 months until the “go-live” date.

### **How Can I Learn More About CM/ECF?**

The Administrative Office (AO) welcomes your inquiries regarding CM/ECF. For more information, please visit the CM/ECF Internet site at <http://156.119.80.10/it/ecf/index.html>. Many Courts have information available on their Intranet sites listed at the above address.

Also, please contact Dianne Schmitz or Jim Snyder, your local project managers for any questions about the CM/ECF implementation process.